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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VATICAN 000154

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [VT](#) [LE](#)  
SUBJECT: LEBANON: VATICAN PUSHES CEASEFIRE, BUT STAYS POSITIVE

REF: (A) VATICAN 0153 (B) VATICAN 0146 AND PREVIOUS

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CLASSIFIED BY: Christopher Sandrolini, Charge d'affaires a.i.,  
EXEC, State.  
REASON: 1.4 (d)

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Summary  
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1. (C) Holy See FM Lajolo told the Charge July 28 that the  
Vatican still placed top priority on an

immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Lebanon conflict, but also  
acknowledged the good with regard to

the Rome conference. Lajolo also emphasized "the positive  
aspects" of the summit in his comments

to the media. In private, Lajolo said he would have liked to  
see at least an appeal for an immediate

ceasefire come out of the summit. Lajolo recognized the USG's  
efforts to ameliorate the humanitarian

situation, but urged the U.S. to do more to help get the aid to  
the people. Lajolo noted that the papal

nuncio in Syria enjoyed good access to the Syrian government and  
could be a back channel for the

USG if we desired. Lajolo thanked the USG for its support for  
the Vatican's participation July 26. The

Holy See will continue to press for an immediate ceasefire and  
will hold to traditional Vatican views on

war, peace, terrorism, and reprisals -- but having participated  
in the conference, their principals will put a

more positive spin on the diplomatic efforts now underway. End  
Summary.

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Emphasizing Positive  
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12. (C) Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, the Holy See's Secretary for Relations with States (FM-equivalent) told

Charge July 28 that the Vatican still placed top priority on an immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Lebanon

conflict, but said he also wanted to emphasize the "positive step" represented by the Rome conference. Lajolo's public comments (ref A) have been faithful to this line; when asked if the conference had been a "disappointment," he told media outlets July 27 that "for the well-informed who understood the difficulties [involved], it could perhaps be said that the results were significant." He then went on to "underline the positive aspects" of the summit, citing the strong showing of international concern about the situation, the discussion of an international force, the

commitment of humanitarian aid to the Lebanese, and the commitment of conference attendees

to continue to address the issue.

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Cease-Fire  
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13. (C) Later in the interview, Lajolo emphasized the need for a ceasefire, and noted what he regarded

as the "ambiguity" of the call on Israel to show restraint -- adding that only the United States can influence

the Israelis. He also discussed the suffering of all people involved. Cardinal Secretary of State Sodano

generally took a similar position to Lajolo's in his media interviews, describing the summit as a "step forward."

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He placed somewhat more emphasis on the "disappointment" that the summit did not result in an immediate ceasefire. In his meeting with charge, Lajolo agreed that the international community had to help create circumstances for a sustainable ceasefire, but did not agree that the ceasefire itself should wait for the achievement of such conditions. He said that the current situation, with innocent civilians dying and the

Arab world "inflamed", was untenable. He commented that Israel may have underestimated the difficulty of creating a new "order" in Lebanon.

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Humanitarian Aid  
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14. (C) Charge noted the substantial USG commitment of humanitarian aid to the region, and Lajolo

recognized the important effort. He urged the U.S. to ensure that the aid gets distributed to those

who need it: humanitarian corridors had to be aided by efforts on the ground to distribute food and other necessities. Lajolo repeated Vatican concerns reported previously by Post about the suffering of the

Christian community in Lebanon; he said Christian areas are being bombed. He had been visited this week

by the papal nuncio in Beirut, whom he described as "desperate", and who has considerable difficulty in communicating with Rome

from Lebanon.

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Back Channel?  
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15. (C) Lajolo noted his belief that Syria must be involved in resolving the situation in Lebanon. He observed

that the papal nuncio in Syria, Archbishop Giovanni Battista Morandini, enjoyed unusually good access to the Syrian government, and could be a back channel for the USG if we desired. The Holy See has told Damascus that Syria should refrain from provocations, avoid responding to provocations, and work with the UN to resolve the crisis. However, the Holy See will not make any public calls on Syria. As for Iran, Lajolo said that the

Holy See not heard from that quarter since the Lebanon conflict began. Charge pointed out the useful role that the

Holy See - and Europe in general - could play in pressuring these countries to take responsibility for Hezbollah.

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Comment  
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16. (C) Lajolo thanked the USG for its support for the Vatican's participation in the summit, and both he

and Sodano have thanked "the organizers" publicly. The Holy See will continue to press for an immediate

ceasefire, but is also aware of the difficulties involved in the issue. Having participated in the conference,

Vatican principals will put a more positive spin on their statements about USG diplomatic efforts.

17. (C) At the same time, Holy See officials will hold to traditional Vatican views on war, peace, terrorism, and

reprisals. In response to the Charge's emphasis on Hezbollah as the real problem in the conflict, Lajolo

agreed. "But we all know Hezbollah are fanatics," he continued. "We have to expect a responsible and democratically elected government like Israel to take steps that are proportionate to the dangers it faces,"

he concluded. Post has reported on the likelihood that the views of Sodano and Lajolo on this issue might

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differ somewhat from those of the pope, and has noted the more balanced nature of Benedict's own statements.

It was thus interesting to note today Lajolo's vigorous emphasis that the Holy See, including the pope, is of one mind on Lebanon, particularly regarding the urgent need for a ceasefire.  
SANDROLINI